

University of Groningen

Promoting historical contextualization: the development and testing of a pedagogy

Huijgen, Tim; van de Grift, Wim; van Boxtel, Carla; Holthuis, Paul

Published in:
Journal of Curriculum Studies

DOI:
[10.1080/00220272.2018.1435724](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2018.1435724)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2018

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Huijgen, T., van de Grift, W., van Boxtel, C., & Holthuis, P. (2018). Promoting historical contextualization: the development and testing of a pedagogy. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 50(3), 410-434.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2018.1435724>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.



Promoting historical contextualization: the development and testing of a pedagogy

Tim Huijgen, Wim van de Grift, Carla van Boxtel & Paul Holthuis

To cite this article: Tim Huijgen, Wim van de Grift, Carla van Boxtel & Paul Holthuis (2018): Promoting historical contextualization: the development and testing of a pedagogy, Journal of Curriculum Studies, DOI: [10.1080/00220272.2018.1435724](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2018.1435724)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2018.1435724>



© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 09 Feb 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 214



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Promoting historical contextualization: the development and testing of a pedagogy

Tim Huijgen^a , Wim van de Grift^a , Carla van Boxtel^b  and Paul Holthuis^a

^aFaculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences, Department of Teacher Education, University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands; ^bResearch Institute of Child Development and Education and Amsterdam School of Historical Studies, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

The aim of this explorative study was to develop and test a pedagogy aimed at promoting students' ability to perform historical contextualization. Teaching historical contextualization was conceptualized in terms of four pedagogical design principles: (1) making students aware of the consequences of a present-oriented perspective when examining the past, (2) enhancing the reconstruction of a historical context, (3) enhancing the use of the historical context to explain historical phenomena and (4) enhancing historical empathy. The effectiveness of these principles was explored in a lesson unit focusing on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In a quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test design with experimental and control conditions, the effects of the pedagogy on 15- and 16-year-old students' ability to perform historical contextualization were examined ($n = 131$). The results indicated that students in the experimental condition significantly improved their ability to perform historical contextualization compared to students in the control condition. These findings could be used to help teachers and other educational professionals design and implement historical contextualization tasks and instructions.

KEYWORDS

History instruction;
curriculum development;
curriculum design;
educational experiments;
educational principles

Scholars such as Seixas (2015), VanSledright (2011) and Wineburg (2001) emphasize that history education should not only focus on learning historical facts but also include promoting students' historical thinking and reasoning. Historical reasoning competencies have therefore become increasingly important in western history education (Erdmann & Hasberg, 2011). A key component of historical reasoning is the ability to perform historical contextualization (Lévesque, 2008; Seixas & Morton, 2013; Van Drie & Van Boxtel, 2008), which is the ability to situate phenomena and actions by people in the context of time, historical location, long-term developments or particular events to give meaning to these phenomena and actions (Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2012). Without this ability, for example, historical agents' actions cannot be explained and historical events cannot adequately be interpreted (Barton & Levstik, 2004; VanSledright, 2002).

CONTACT Tim Huijgen  t.d.huijgen@rug.nl

© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

Despite the importance of historical contextualization, research indicates that many students struggle when asked to perform historical contextualization tasks because they view the past from a present-oriented perspective (Foster, Ashby, & Lee, 2008; Hartmann & Hasselhorn, 2008; Huijgen, Van Boxtel, Van de Grift, & Holthuis, 2014; Shemilt, 2009). As Reisman and Wineburg (2008) noted: 'Contextualized historical thinking runs counter to the narratives and frameworks that many students bring to class' (p. 203). Teachers should therefore explicitly teach students historical contextualization to help them overcome possible present-oriented perspectives.

Research on historical contextualization has focused on, for example, how students performed historical contextualization (e.g. Berti, Baldin, & Toneatti, 2009; Wooden, 2008) and how it can be observed (Huijgen, Van de Grift, Van Boxtel, & Holthuis, 2017) or promoted (e.g. Baron, 2016; Boerman-Cornell, 2015). However, experimental studies testing pedagogies on historical contextualization are scarce. This is unfortunate since teachers seem to struggle with developing instructional tools to engage students in historical reasoning processes (e.g. Achinstein & Fogo, 2015; Reisman, 2015; Saye & SSIRC, 2013). More examples of effective and practical instructional tools are therefore desired within the field of history education (e.g. Fogo, 2014; Grant & Gradwell, 2010; Reisman & Fogo, 2016).

The aim of the present study is therefore twofold: (1) to develop a pedagogy for promoting students' ability to perform historical contextualization and (2) to test this pedagogy for success in a pre- and post-test quasi-experimental design.

Theoretical framework

The concept of historical contextualization

Some studies define historical contextualization as a heuristic (in addition to sourcing and corroboration) to examine historical sources (e.g. Britt & Aglinskias, 2002; Rouet, Favart, Britt, & Perfetti, 1997; Wineburg, 1991). However, in history education, it is possible to contextualize historical agents' actions, historical events and historical sources (Havekes, Coppen, Luttenberg, & Van Boxtel, 2012). Therefore, in this study, we conceptualize historical contextualization as the ability to situate phenomena and the actions of people in the context of time, historical location, long-term developments or particular events to give meaning to these phenomena and actions (Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2012).

A key component for performing historical contextualization successfully is students' understanding of the differences between the past and present (Seixas & Peck, 2004). Historical contextualization concerns:

a temporal sense of difference that includes deep understanding of the social, political, and cultural norms of the time period under investigation as well as knowledge of the events leading up to the historical situation and other relevant events that are occurring concurrently. (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 43)

Historical contextualization is therefore a complex skill because it not only requires historical factual knowledge and a sense of chronology but also the ability to identify gaps in this knowledge, the ability to formulate questions and the ability to question information or conclusions (Wineburg, 1998). For example, to explain why Julius Caesar could not have had breakfast in Rome and dinner in the Gallic region of France on the same day, students have to contextualize the ancient Roman period, including the knowledge that the transportation necessary for such a day trip was not available in those times (Lévesque, 2008).

Teaching historical contextualization

Building on Wineburg's (1991) work, most intervention studies that provide insight into the teaching of historical contextualization consider contextualization to be one heuristic to be used (besides sourcing and corroboration) to examine historical documents. For example, Nokes, Dole, and Hacker (2007) tested the effect of heuristic instruction among 16- and 17-year-old students that explicitly taught sourcing, corroboration and contextualization. Contextualization was taught by discussing the use and importance of contextualization, modelling contextualization and asking students to create a historical context of a document to interpret the documents. In the pre- and post-test, the authors found that only 7% of the students used contextualization and therefore conducted no further analyses. Reisman (2012a) examined the effect of a curriculum intervention (focusing on sourcing, corroboration, close reading and contextualization) in disciplinary reading among 11th-grade students. Contextualization was taught by cognitive modelling, guided practice or independent practice. A historical reading strategy chart with guiding questions (e.g. What else was happening at the time this was written?) helped students perform contextualization. However, no significant intervention effect for contextualization was found, and Reisman (2012a) concluded that the question of how to teach contextualization remains unanswered. De La Paz et al. (2014) tested a curriculum intervention, including explicitly promoting contextualization, among eight grade students to test their disciplinary writing skills. To promote contextualization, the students were provided a handout with questions focusing on the type of document (e.g. What type of document is this and where did it appear?) and the time period and setting of the document (e.g. What else was happening at the time?). The students' disciplinary writing skills improved, but no specific information is given on their improvement in contextualization.

In other studies, historical contextualization was the main dependent variable, and the focus was less on contextualization as a component of the critical examination of historical sources but more on the contextualization of particular events, situations or the actions of people in the past. For example, Van Boxtel and Van Drie (2012) asked students aged 14–17 to interpret and date situations or events that are described in a historical document or shown in a historical image ('What is it about?'). They found that instruction focusing on the development of a rich associative network of historical knowledge and knowledge of landmarks helps students to interpret the historical situation described or depicted because they are better able to reconstruct a historical context. Building upon the research literature on historical contextualization, Huijgen, Van de Grift et al. (2017) suggested four teacher strategies that might improve students' ability to perform historical contextualization: (1) making students aware of the consequences of a present-oriented perspective when examining the past; (2) enhancing the reconstruction of a historical context; (3) enhancing the use of a historical context to explain historical phenomena and (4) enhancing historical empathy.

These strategies can help students perform historical contextualization, not only when they have to contextualize historical sources but also when historical events and historical agents' actions are discussed in classrooms. In this study, these four teaching strategies were therefore used to develop and test a pedagogy for teaching historical contextualization. The following section describes a translation from the teachers' strategies into pedagogical design principles.

Pedagogical design principles of historical contextualization

Making students aware of the consequences of a present-oriented perspective when examining the past

Presentism, or viewing the past from a present-oriented perspective, is a bias in which people assume that the same values, intentions, attitudes and beliefs existed in the past as they exist today (Barton & Levstik, 2004). We can never be perfectly non-presentist (e.g. Pendry & Husbands, 2000; VanSledright, 2001), but teachers should make students aware of their own values and beliefs and the consequences of this perspective when explaining the past (Seixas & Peck, 2004). Students will otherwise not succeed in explaining historical phenomena and historical agents' actions (e.g. Barton, 2008; Lee, 2005; Wineburg, 2001).

To make students in history classrooms aware of their presentism, Havekes et al. (2012) argued that creating cognitive incongruity that is aimed at testing students' assumptions or creating a conflict with their prior knowledge can promote historical contextualization. In previous research, we therefore explored the use of cognitive conflicts to trigger and prevent presentism among students (Huijgen & Holthuis, 2015). In this approach, possible present-oriented perspectives among students become 'visible' by presenting a historical event that students find difficult to explain. When students display present-oriented perspectives when answering accompanying explanatory questions, the teacher would explain the consequences (i.e. not being able to explain and understand the historical event under study) of viewing the past from this perspective. For example, students could be shown a 1932 election poster of Hitler's political party and be asked to explain whether a German person could have voted for this political party. This approach appears promising but has never been tested in an experimental study. In our pedagogy, we therefore aim to make students aware of the consequences of a present-oriented perspective when examining the past by creating cognitive incongruity.

Enhancing the reconstruction of a historical context

Different studies stress the importance of historical content knowledge (including chronological and spatial knowledge) to perform historical contextualization successfully (e.g. Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2012; Wineburg, 2001). To reconstruct the historical context, students and teachers can use different frames of reference (De Keyser & Vandepitte, 1998): a chronological frame of reference and a spatial frame of reference and a social frame of reference comprising social-economic, social-political and social-cultural knowledge. To examine the frames of reference and reconstruct a historical context, students can use different primary and secondary sources, such as movies (e.g. Metzger, 2012), visual images (e.g. Baron, 2016; Boerman-Cornell, 2015; Wilschut, 2012) and written documents (e.g. Fasulo, Girardet, & Pontecorvo, 1998).

In previous research, we found indicators that students who combine different frames of reference are more successful in reconstructing the historical context to explain historical agents' actions. To reconstruct a context successfully, it is important to provide good examples and scaffolds of contextualized thinking (Havekes et al., 2012; Huijgen & Holthuis, 2015; Reisman & Wineburg, 2008). For example, teachers could provide students with scaffolds that focus on examining the different frames of reference before students formulate arguments and present conclusions. In our pedagogy, we therefore use the

different frames of reference to teach students how to reconstruct a historical context of the historical topic under study to answer and discuss historical questions.

Enhancing the use of a historical context to explain the past

Teachers should also create opportunities for students to reason using their historical context knowledge (Counsell, Burn, & Chapman, 2016; Halvorsen, Harris, Aponte Martinez, & Frasier, 2015). Historical context knowledge could, for example, be used to interpret a historical source (Reisman & Wineburg, 2008), formulate historical questions (Logtenberg, Van Boxtel, & Van Hout-Wolters, 2011) or date and sequence historical events, documents and images (Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2012).

Research indicates, however, that a strong focus in history classrooms on the transmission of historical content knowledge is preferred to creating opportunities for students to reason with their knowledge (e.g. Saye & SSIRC, 2013; VanSledright, 2011). Different studies distil the general image of a teacher who often uses the history textbook narrative and focuses on the transmission of historical content knowledge, such as memorizing (nationally) significant figures, events and narratives (e.g. Achinstein & Fogo, 2015; Barton & Levstik, 2003). In our pedagogy, we therefore explicitly created opportunities for students to reason with their historical context knowledge to answer and discuss explanatory historical questions.

Enhancing historical empathy

Historical empathy is 'the ability to see and entertain, as conditionally appropriate, connections between intentions, circumstances and actions and to see how any particular perspective would actually have affected actions in particular circumstances' (Lee & Ashby, 2001, p. 25). Historical empathy is the ability to see and judge the past on its own terms by attempting to understand the historical agents' frames of reference and actions (Yilmaz, 2007). Despite some scholars claiming that historical empathy is idealistic and can never be fully achieved because many historical agents are absent (Metzger, 2012), most scholars agree that historical empathy and historical contextualization are closely related (e.g. Cunningham, 2009; Endacott & Brooks, 2013).

Historical empathy may serve as a 'fall back rationale', i.e. when students are to contextualize historical events or actions but lack relevant historical knowledge (Berti et al., 2009). For example, students who did not possess adequate historical context knowledge regarding Germany in 1930 could successfully explain the actions of a historical agent based on affective connections and recognizable emotions, such as the fear of being unemployed (Huijgen, Van Boxtel, Van de Grift, & Holthuis, 2017). In history classrooms, teachers could choose a historical agent relevant to the historical topic under study and instruct their students to examine the historical agents' lives to successfully perform historical contextualization. What was the social position of the historical agent in the society? Was the historical agent wealthy or poor? Did the historical agent belong to the elite? Answering these types of questions could result in a successful explanation of historical agents' decisions and an understanding of historical events. For example, examining the life of a young man (Hannes) who lived in Germany in 1930 and must decide which political party he would vote for might result in a better understanding of the rise of Hitler (Hartmann & Hasselhorn, 2008; Huijgen, Van Boxtel et al., 2017). Endacott and Pelekanos (2015) discussed introducing relevant historical agents and their situation to explain and understand social control in ancient Athens.

These studies suggested that when students use affective connections and focus on the role of a historical agent, they may be able to perform historical contextualization successfully. In our pedagogy, we therefore selected a relevant historical agent for each historical topic. Students were provided with a short description accompanied by two central questions that the students need to answer. To answer the questions successfully, the students needed to use affective connections and consider the role and (social) position of the historical agent.

Research question

Since practical and effective instructional tools for teaching historical contextualization are lacking, this study focuses on identifying whether a developed pedagogy, based on the pedagogical design principles of historical contextualization, can improve students' ability to perform historical contextualization. For the present study, we formulated the following research question: What are the effects of a lesson unit based on the four design principles for teaching historical contextualization on 15- and 16-year-old students' ability to perform historical contextualization?

Method

Research design

We chose an empirical quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test design (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002) to test the pedagogy. Compared to the experimental designs, quasi-experimental designs lack the random assignment of participants to experimental or control groups. Random assignment was difficult because our research was conducted in an educational setting and we were dependent on the teachers' voluntary participation to implement an intervention. Within the quasi-experimental design, we established an experimental condition where the teachers used the pedagogy and a control condition where the teachers used a more traditional lesson structure. The participating teachers in the experimental condition were asked to keep a diary (e.g. Bailey, 1990) during the intervention to describe examples of how students might improve in historical contextualization using the pedagogical framework. Post-intervention interviews with the teachers in the experimental condition were used to discuss the examples in the teachers' diaries. This additional qualitative method provided more insights on how the pedagogy was implemented and how students might have improved in historical contextualization.

Participants

Since we wanted as few differences as possible between the teachers, we used non-probability sampling to select teachers of a similar age, work experience as a history teacher, nationality and educational degree from our professional network to participate in the intervention. All selected teachers had participated in a one-day professionalization programme at the institution of the first author but were not specifically trained in historical contextualization. All teachers participated voluntarily, held Dutch nationality and had a masters-level educational degree. Their schools did not differ significantly from the total population

regarding graduation and enrolment numbers (Statistics Netherlands, 2016). The participating teachers attended two training meetings (two hours per meeting) to understand the lesson structure and activities and how to administer the pre- and post-tests. Table 1 presents the teachers' characteristics. The average student class size was 20.2 students in the experimental condition and 14.0 students in the control condition. History is an elective in Dutch upper secondary education, and the classes can therefore differ in size.

A total of 101 secondary school students (44 male, 57 female) participated in the experimental condition. The mean students' age in this condition was 15.9 years and ranged from 15 to 18 years. The control condition yielded a total of 30 students (14 male, 16 female). The mean students' age in the control condition was 15.9 years, ranging from 15 to 19 years. All participating students were general secondary higher educational students (the second-highest secondary educational track in The Netherlands) and did not have extensive prior knowledge of the historical topic of the lesson unit. The historical topic for the experimental and control condition was the seventeenth and eighteenth century because this topic fits with the teachers' curriculum during the period in which we wanted to implement the intervention.

Historical contextualization instrument

To answer our research question, we developed and used a historical contextualization test. In two meetings with four experienced history teachers (all four teachers had more than 15 years of working experience each as history teachers), we constructed 30 items to test the students' ability to perform historical contextualization. All items consisted of a historical written source or image and an accompanying choice of two answers: one answer presented a present-oriented perspective, and the other offered a contextualized perspective on the historical source. For example, the students were provided with a source describing the arranged and forced marriage of an eleven-year-old girl in the Late Middle Ages. The students had to choose the statement that fit the source best: a present-oriented answer (i.e. an eleven-year-old should not be forced to marry) or a contextualized answer (i.e. these marriages were based on profit for the families). The items in the test comprised historical topics from the ancient to the modern period. These 30 items were piloted among 158 secondary students from three different schools, with a mean age of 15.1 years old. The pilot results displayed a Cronbach's alpha (α) of 0.69.

Based on this test, the authors of this study constructed another eight items, yielding a total of 38 items. Next, we randomly assigned 19 items to the pre-test and 19 items to the post-test to reduce the *carryover effect*, i.e. the effect where students remember their answers

Table 1. Teachers' characteristics.

Teacher	Class	Gender	Age	Years of work experience
<i>Experimental groups</i>				
Ben	1	Male	43	16
David	2	Male	41	14
Wendy	3	Female	50	15
Kim	4	Female	40	13
Lisa	5	Female	32	7
<i>Control groups</i>				
Ben	6	Male	43	16
Emily	7	Female	48	4

from the pre-test and benefit from this retained information in the post-test (Bose & Dey, 2009). When analysing the instruments' reliability, we found five items in the pre-test and five items in the post-test that threatened the internal consistency of the instruments ($\alpha < 0.60$). We therefore chose to delete these items. This resulted in a pre-test of 14 items ($\alpha = 0.70$) and a post-test of 14 items ($\alpha = 0.68$). There was a significant correlation between the pre-test and post-test ($r = 0.49, p < 0.01$).

Moreover, we asked two expert history teacher educators and two educational measurement experts to review the deleted items and the final version of the pre-test and the post-test to ensure face and content validity. The experts found no threats in deleting the ten items and noted that the final pre- and post-tests measure the students' ability to perform historical contextualization and that the tests do not differ significantly in time needed to be completed by the students. The instruments' items were also piloted in four different history classes to test them for practical use. The four teachers who conducted the tests did not have any specific comments about the content or length of the items. Appendix A presents examples of the pre- and post-test items.

The historical contextualization pedagogy

To develop the pedagogy, we followed the guidelines of McKenney and Reeves (2012) for educational design research. We first explored, using focus group methodology, how history teachers might promote historical contextualization in classrooms without specific training or support. To develop an effective pedagogy, we were interested in what teachers might or might not do. Next, based on the exploration and pedagogical design principles of historical contextualization, we constructed the lesson activities from the historical contextualization pedagogy. Using focus group methodology, the pedagogy was reviewed and adjusted for practical use before being tested in a quasi-experimental design.

Exploring the teaching of historical contextualization

We used focus group methodology (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996) to explore how history teachers might promote historical contextualization without specific training or support. The focus group consisted of 16 history teachers (ranging in work experience as history teachers from 1 to 42 years), and all teachers participated voluntarily. To structure the discussion, we first explained the four teachers' strategies of Huijgen, Van de Grift et al. (2017) and asked which strategies the teachers employ in their lessons and how the strategies are implemented. Most attention was paid to the reconstruction of the historical context, and the least attention was paid to increase awareness among students of their possible present-oriented perspectives. Next, we provided the *Framework for Analysing the Teaching of Historical Contextualization* (FAT-HC) of Huijgen, Van de Grift et al. (2017) and a short explanation of the items and asked which indicators they frequently used in their lessons. The least attention was paid to items that focus on engaging students in historical contextualization processes (e.g. the students place phenomena in long-term development). This is in line with previous research where we observed how history teachers promote historical contextualization in classrooms (Huijgen, Holthuis, Van Boxtel, & Van de Grift, 2017).

We ended the discussion by asking about the challenges teachers experienced when teaching historical contextualization. Most teachers acknowledged the importance of the indicators of the FAT-HC but noted that they did not have the time, expertise, or support to

develop such lesson activities. Based on this exploration, we aimed to help teachers explicitly engage students in historical contextualization processes.

Lesson activities of the pedagogy

To construct the lesson activities, we used the four pedagogical design principles of historical contextualization as a starting point: (1) making students aware of the consequences of a present-oriented perspective when examining the past; (2) enhancing the reconstruction of a historical context; (3) enhancing the use of the historical context to explain a historical phenomenon and (4) enhancing historical empathy.

The first lesson activity promotes awareness of students' possible present-oriented perspectives. For each lesson, we constructed a case centralizing a particular historical topic that students find difficult to explain without historical context knowledge (i.e. creating cognitive incongruity). Each case study was accompanied by an explanatory question that students had to answer and discuss in the classroom. During this classroom discussion, teachers explicitly explained the consequences of viewing the past from a present-oriented perspective. For example, we created a case centralizing the exchange of the colony of New Netherland, currently New York City, for Suriname in 1626. Most students generally find it difficult to explain why 'the Dutch Republic exchanged a world-class city for a small country in South America'. The central question of this case study was 'Can you explain why the Dutch Republic exchanged New Netherland for Suriname in 1626?' In the following classroom discussion, the students were allowed to react and attempt to answer the question while the teacher corrected possible present-oriented perspectives and explicitly explained, by stressing the differences between past and present knowledge, beliefs and values, that the case cannot be explained when using present-oriented perspectives.

The second lesson activity reconstructed the historical context. In each lesson, the students (in groups of four) had to reconstruct the historical context of the case using a chronological dimension (using a timeline), a spatial dimension (using geographical maps), and a social-political, social-economical and social-cultural dimension. To reconstruct the historical context, students were provided primary and secondary sources that addressed all frames of reference. Guiding questions were provided to help students examine the social-political, social-economical and social-cultural frames of reference (see Appendix B). The teachers in the experimental condition were provided the reconstructed historical context (i.e. the historical context knowledge of the different frames of reference), and each group had to present the reconstructed context to the teacher to check for correctness. For example, in the case of the exchange of New Netherland, the students received information to create a timeline of events. A geographical map of the Americas was displayed, and students were presented with historical sources that provide information on the Dutch political climate in the Dutch Republic and New Netherland around 1626, the economic importance of plantations and the beliefs and values of different people in the seventeenth century. After the student groups reconstructed the context of the New Netherland exchange using the guiding questions, the teachers corrected mistakes and provided further explanation when needed.

The third lesson activity uses the historical context to explain historical phenomena. After the historical context of the case was reconstructed by the student groups, the teachers asked students in a classroom discussion again to answer the central question of the case but now while referring to their acquired historical context knowledge. Teachers explicitly

stressed that considering the historical context could make students aware of their possible present-oriented perspectives while examining the past. For the case of the exchange of the colony of New Netherland, the students again had to answer the following question: 'Can you explain why the Dutch Republic exchanged New Netherland for Suriname in 1626?' To answer this question, students had to, for example, compare the economic importance of Suriname (which had far more plantations and raw minerals) to the economic importance of New Netherland (which had far fewer plantations and raw minerals). At the end of this lesson activity, the teachers and students together evaluated any possible shift among the students from a present-oriented perspective towards a historically contextualized perspective.

The fourth lesson activity was a historical empathy task, where students had to study a historical agent related to the historical topic of the case. To design these historical empathy tasks, we used the theoretical framework of Endacott and Brooks (2013), who argue that effective historical empathy tasks address three components: historical contextualization, affective connections and perspective adoption. For the New Netherland case, the historical agent was Willem Bosman, a director of the Dutch West-India Company as well as a merchant and slave trader. The students were given a short description of the historical context and historical agent and had to answer a question similar to this: 'If you were Willem Bosman, would you fear being prosecuted for crimes against humanity?' This question addresses the three components of the framework of Endacott and Brooks (2013) because the answer requires historical context knowledge (i.e. the economic and political circumstances of the Dutch Republic in the late seventeenth century), affective connections (i.e. seeking a connection between the life of Willem Bosman and the students' lives) and adopting the perspective of a historical agent (i.e. understanding Bosman's beliefs, position and attitude).

Reviewing the pedagogy

Brown (1992) argues that educational interventions must be designed to inform practice. The intervention must therefore be easily translated from experimental classrooms to average classrooms and from experimental teachers to average teachers. Considering this important point and to further examine the ecological validity of the pedagogy, we established a focus group to review the developed pedagogy for its practical use. In total, 10 history teachers (all with more than 10 years of experience as a history teacher) participated. To structure the discussion, we presented the lesson activities of the pedagogy and asked the teachers to review each lesson activity for its practical use.

Most teachers found that the concept of the cases triggered presentism among the students, which was exciting and motivating for the students. However, three teachers had some feedback regarding two cases. Based on suggestions from these teachers, we developed two different cases. The teachers liked the structure of first presenting a case, reconstructing the context and finally using historical context knowledge to explain the case. The teachers also approved of the historical empathy task but were concerned that it might be too strenuous for the students to cover in one lesson. We ended the discussion by asking for general remarks regarding the pedagogy. In general, the teachers noted that the students' ability to perform historical contextualization should be increased with the pedagogy. Despite the teachers' mild concern about the length of the lesson unit, we chose to maintain the length of the intervention (eight lessons) because a shorter intervention may not result

in a deeper understanding of the concept of historical contextualization (e.g. Reisman & Wineburg, 2008).

The control condition

To test the pedagogy, a control condition was designed using previous research in which we observed how teachers promote historical contextualization (Huijgen, Holthuis et al., 2017). In most of the observed lessons, the teachers first activated the students' prior knowledge by asking the students questions. Next, the teachers explained a historical event by reconstructing the historical context. Finally, the students had to finish the history textbook assignments, which were also evaluated after completion. We therefore used this lesson structure as the core for the control condition lessons. Dutch history textbooks do not contain assignments focusing explicitly on historical contextualization. Table 2 presents an overview of the different lessons in the experimental and control conditions. This first lesson of both conditions after the pre-test is described in more detail since the following lessons have the same lesson structure and activities but differ in historical topic.

Implementation fidelity

The implementation fidelity of the experimental and control condition was checked by post-intervention interviews (cf. Nelson, Cordray, Hulleman, Darrow, & Sommer, 2012). In the post-intervention interviews, we asked all the teachers to score how each lesson activity of the experimental and control conditions was implemented (0 = not implemented at all, 1 = partly implemented and 2 = fully implemented). Table 3 presents the average implementation scores of the different lesson activities in both conditions on the two-point scale.

Results

Historical contextualization

Table 4 presents the students' mean historical contextualization pre- and post-test scores for the two conditions (experimental and control). The two conditions differ only slightly in their mean pre-test scores, but the mean post-test scores differ to a much greater extent. To assess the comparability of the conditions prior to the intervention, we evaluated the differences between the students' pre-test scores in the different conditions. This evaluation revealed no significant differences ($F(1,129) = 0.18, p = 0.89, \eta_p^2 = 0.00$). We did find a significant difference between the students' post-test scores in the different conditions ($F(1,129) = 10.70, p = 0.001, \eta_p^2 = 0.08$).

To examine the gains made by the experimental group, a paired sample test was conducted that revealed a significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental condition; $t(100) = -2.37, p = 0.02$. To further assess the gains of the experimental group, an effect size was calculated. Morris (2008) describes an effect size for the pre-test-post-test-control design where the standardized effect of the treatment is defined as the difference between groups in the mean pre-post change divided by the standard deviation of the untreated population. In our case, this effect size is 0.72, which is an effect between intermediate and large. This standardized effect of the treatment is significant ($p = 0.001$).

Table 2. (Continued).

Lesson	Historical topic ^a	Experimental condition	Control condition
5	Worldwide trading in the seventeenth century	<p><i>Case to enhance awareness of present-oriented perspectives:</i> Students have to explain the exchange of the colony of New Netherland for Suriname</p> <p><i>Task to reconstruct the historical context:</i> Students reconstruct the historical context of trade in the seventeenth century</p> <p><i>Explanation of the case:</i> The teacher asks the students to explain the case again</p> <p><i>Historical empathy task:</i> The task focused on the Dutch slave trader Willem Bosman. For example, students have to explain why Bosman was not arrested by the government for conducting crimes</p>	<p><i>Prior knowledge activation:</i> The teacher activates the students' prior knowledge on trading in the seventeenth century</p> <p><i>Teacher lecturing:</i> The teacher explains how people traded in the seventeenth century</p> <p><i>Individual assignments:</i> Students work individually to complete the history textbook assignments</p> <p><i>Whole-class discussion:</i> Students' answers to the textbook assignments are discussed</p>
6	The scientific revolution in the seventeenth century	<p><i>Case to enhance awareness of present-oriented perspectives:</i> Students have to explain why Copernicus' book on the Solar System was placed on a list of forbidden books</p> <p><i>Task to reconstruct the historical context:</i> Students reconstruct the historical context of the scientific revolution</p> <p><i>Explanation of the case:</i> The teacher asks the students to explain the case again</p> <p><i>Historical empathy task:</i> The historical agent was Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, a Dutch inventor. Students, for example, have to examine how most people would have reacted when Van Leeuwenhoek said that he could see animalcules</p>	<p><i>Prior knowledge activation:</i> The teacher activates the students' prior knowledge on the scientific revolution</p> <p><i>Teacher lecturing:</i> The teacher explains the origin and characteristics of the scientific revolution</p> <p><i>Individual assignments:</i> Students work individually to complete the history textbook assignments</p> <p><i>Whole-class discussion:</i> Students' answers to the textbook assignments are discussed</p>
7	The Enlightenment in the eighteenth century	<p><i>Case to enhance awareness of present-oriented perspectives:</i> Students have to explain why Montesquieu's book on the <i>Trias Politica</i> was forbidden in many European countries and why Montesquieu even received death threats</p> <p><i>Task to reconstruct the historical context:</i> Students reconstruct the historical context of the Enlightenment</p> <p><i>Explanation of the case:</i> The teacher asks the students to explain the case again</p> <p><i>Historical empathy task:</i> Voltaire was the historical agent of the task. For example, students have to explain why Voltaire fled to the Lorraine area after he had published <i>Lettres anglaises</i> in 1734</p>	<p><i>Prior knowledge activation:</i> The teacher activates the students' prior knowledge on the Enlightenment</p> <p><i>Teacher lecturing:</i> The teacher explains the origin and characteristics of the Enlightenment</p> <p><i>Individual assignments:</i> Students work individually to complete the history textbook assignments</p> <p><i>Whole-class discussion:</i> Students' answers to the textbook assignments are discussed</p>

(Continued)



Table 2. (Continued).

Lesson	Historical topic ^a	Experimental condition	Control condition
8	Enlightened absolutism in the eighteenth century	<p><i>Case to enhance awareness of present-oriented perspectives:</i> Students have to explain why Catherine the Great, an enlightened absolutist monarch, became far stricter at the end of the eighteenth century</p> <p><i>Task to reconstruct the historical context:</i> Students reconstruct the historical context of enlightened absolutism</p> <p><i>Explanation of the case:</i> The teacher asks the students to explain the case again</p> <p><i>Historical empathy task:</i> The task focuses on Frederick the Great, an enlightened absolutist monarch and Prussian King. Students have to explain, for example, the extent to which Frederick the Great was an enlightened monarch</p> <p><i>Case to enhance awareness of present-oriented perspectives:</i> Students have to explain why slavery in The Netherlands was abolished in 1863 while other European countries abolished slavery much earlier</p> <p><i>Task to reconstruct the historical context:</i> Students reconstruct the historical context of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade</p> <p><i>Explanation of the case:</i> The teacher asks the students to explain the case again</p> <p><i>Historical empathy task:</i> The historical agent was Harriet Beecher Stowe, an American abolitionist and author. Students, for example, have to explain how Stowe's opinions were received in the southern United States</p> <p><i>Case to enhance awareness of present-oriented perspectives:</i> Students have to explain the joy of the French people when Marie-Antoinette, who was married to King Louis XVI, was executed in 1793</p> <p><i>Task to reconstruct the historical context:</i> Students reconstruct the historical context of the democratic revolutions</p> <p><i>Explanation of the case:</i> The teacher asks the students to explain the case again</p> <p><i>Historical empathy task:</i> Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol was the historical agent. He was a nobleman who wanted far more political influence for the Dutch people. Students, for example, have to explain how Van der Capellen tot den Pol's ideas were received by different sectors of the population</p> <p>Post-test historical contextualization</p>	<p><i>Prior knowledge activation:</i> The teacher activates the students' prior knowledge on Enlightened absolutism</p> <p><i>Teacher lecturing:</i> The teacher explains the origin and characteristics of enlightened absolutism</p> <p><i>Individual assignments:</i> Students work individually to complete the history textbook assignments</p> <p><i>Whole-class discussion:</i> Students' answers to the textbook assignments are discussed</p> <p><i>Prior knowledge activation:</i> The teacher activates the students' prior knowledge on the Trans-Atlantic slave trade</p> <p><i>Teacher lecturing:</i> The teacher explains the origin and characteristics of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade</p> <p><i>Individual assignments:</i> Students work individually to complete the history textbook assignments</p> <p><i>Whole-class discussion:</i> Students' answers to the textbook assignments are discussed</p> <p><i>Prior knowledge activation:</i> The teacher activates the students' prior knowledge on the democratic revolutions</p> <p><i>Teacher lecturing:</i> The teacher explains the origin and characteristics of the democratic revolutions</p> <p><i>Individual assignments:</i> Students work individually to complete the history textbook assignments</p> <p><i>Whole-class discussion:</i> Students' answers to the textbook assignments are discussed</p> <p>Post-test historical contextualization</p>
9	Trans-Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century		
10	Democratic revolutions in the eighteenth century		
11 & 12	Post-tests		

^aThe experimental and control lessons focus on the same historical topic.

To examine the intervention effect, we first used a multilevel analysis to explore the extent to which the differences in student achievement on historical contextualization can be explained by the differences between classes. We specified classes as a random factor and the pre-test scores as a fixed factor ($-2LL = 539.25$). This model showed that the total variance of student achievement is 4.20 and that 22% of this variance (0.94) can be explained by the differences between classes. Next, we specified classes as a random factor and the pre-test scores and condition as fixed factors to examine the extent to which the differences in student achievement between the different classes can be explained by participating in the experimental condition ($-2LL = 535.02$, indicating a better fit). This model showed a total variance of 3.71, and 12% of this variance (0.46) can be explained by the differences between classes.

The comparison of the two models showed that the treatment only affected the variance explained by the differences between classes (which decreased from 0.94 to 0.46) and not the residual student variance, which remained the same. The result is that more than half (51%) of the differences between the different classes can be explained by participation in the experimental condition. The effect of the treatment on the differences between the classes was significant ($p < 0.05$). We calculated the effect size to examine the amount of variance within the experiment that is explained by the treatment. Our multilevel analyses showed that the treatment was responsible for 11% of the differences in student achievement between students in the experimental condition and those in the control condition, which is considered a medium effect (Cohen, 1988).

Students' improvement in historical contextualization

To further explore how students in the experimental condition might have improved in historical contextualization, we asked the teachers in the post-intervention interviews to evaluate the intervention based on their diary notes and experiences.

All teachers noted that the lesson structure of (1) present a historical case at the start of the lesson, (2) instruct students to reconstruct a historical context of this case and (3) instruct students to evaluate the historical case again using their acquired historical context knowledge promoted historical contextualization. For example, Lisa described in the post-intervention interview that a student immediately reacted from a present-oriented perspective when she showed the painting of the enormous Palace of Versailles, the large building costs and the poor circumstances of many French people. This student noted that people in the past must be really stupid to accept that this palace could be built because the building cost could better be spent on preventing people from dying of starvation. After Lisa explained that one must consider the specific circumstances when explaining historical events and agents' actions and a historical context of was reconstructed (i.e. the political, economic and cultural circumstances of seventeenth-century France) by the students, Lisa noticed that her students were more able to explain the building of the palace. For example, the student who displayed a present-oriented perspective at the beginning of the lesson now used historical context knowledge by considering that French kings in that time period saw themselves as substitutes for God and therefore ruled by absolutism. The student now understood that the French people did not have any political influence and that they could not protest such decisions. Moreover, Lisa noted that the student compared the historical context with the present political situation (i.e. elections to influence political decisions). When Lisa asked the

Table 3. Implementation scores for the lesson activities (maximum score = 2.00).

Lesson activity	Implementation score
<i>Experimental condition</i>	
1. Case to enhance awareness of present-oriented perspectives	1.60
2. Task to reconstruct the historical context	1.60
3. Explanation of the case	1.48
4. Historical empathy task	1.12
<i>Control condition</i>	
1. Prior knowledge activation	1.90
2. Teacher lecturing	1.98
3. Individual assignments	1.66
4. Whole-class discussion	1.36

Table 4. Students' mean scores on historical contextualization.

Condition	<i>n</i>	Pre-test mean (SD)	Post-test mean (SD)
Experimental	101	11.00 (2.47)	11.53 (2.37)
Control	30	11.07 (1.98)	9.90 (2.43)
Total	131		

student to explain why he had changed his answer from his answer in the first lesson activity, the student noted that he knew now that he had to consider the specific circumstances at that time to answer a question about the past.

Another example how students improved in historical contextualization using this lesson structure was provided by David. He experienced the same shift as Lisa among many of his students when he introduced the exchange of New Netherland for Suriname. Many students reacted with 'That is insane' or 'That is really not a good deal'. These students viewed the historical event from a present-oriented perspective (i.e. exchanging a very economically important city for a nugatory country). After the reconstruction of the historical context of this exchange (e.g. the Third Anglo-Dutch War, the plantations of Suriname, triangular trade), the students understood the historical event better because they considered chronological and economic historical context knowledge. For example, different students mentioned that people such as Stuyvesant could not have known that New Netherland would become New York City and that Suriname had far more plantations in the seventeenth century.

Moreover, all teachers noted that the historical empathy tasks promoted historical contextualization because by examining the life of historical agents their students learned how historical agents perceived historical events resulting in the consideration of the specific circumstances of a historical event. Wendy explicitly stressed the additional value of the historical empathy tasks besides the other three lesson activities. Wendy noted that her students found it very difficult to understand and explain the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, even after the historical context of the Enlightenment was reconstructed and discussed. One of her students noted that it was not possible to understand the Enlightenment 'because there is so much to understand'. The historical empathy task consisted of a historical source that described the life of Voltaire and two accompanying questions focusing on how Voltaire saw the Church and why Voltaire risked arrestment. By examining the life of Voltaire, her students were able to understand the broader historical context of the Enlightenment because 'the abstract became more concrete for them', as Wendy noted in the post-intervention interview. For example, one of her students noted that Voltaire criticized the absolute

emperors and religious dogmas of his time. This student understood that Voltaire might have fled because these views were not common in that time period and could therefore triggered resistance among the rulers.

Despite these positive findings, the teachers noted three main issues than can be used to further improve the effectiveness of the intervention to promote historical contextualization. The first issue is that the different lesson activities took more time than estimated. Lisa and Wendy (who both hold an average implementation score of 1.00 out of a two-point scale) noted that they did not complete a number of different lesson activities due to a lack of lesson time. They found eight lessons too long to implement an intervention because they had to prepare students for formal tests. The other teachers ranged in implementation scores between 1.59 and 1.88 and experienced this problem less but also acknowledge that the lesson activities took more time than expected. Because the lesson activities took longer than estimated, the teachers skipped the historical empathy tasks the most because these tasks were scheduled at the end of each lesson. Each teacher, however, conducted at least four of the eight historical empathy tasks.

Secondly, all teachers noted that students became demotivated after three or four lessons due to the repetitive lesson structure. Instead of a repetitive structure, Ben suggested to use only four lessons and to present in the first lesson a historical case that might trigger present-oriented perspectives and an accompanying explanatory question. After the case has been discussed, the teacher could stress the danger of presentism, explain the importance of historical contextualization and model historical contextualization (for example, by discussing the guidelines of Appendix B). This lesson is followed by two lessons where the students and teacher work together on reconstructing the historical context to answer the question of the historical case. In the fourth and final lesson, the teacher evaluates the answer to the question of the historical case with the students.

Finally, Lisa, Ben and Wendy suggested to focus more on the differences between individual students because some of their students were already aware of the consequences of presentism while others viewed historical events from a dominant present-oriented perspective. Lisa suggested to use a different lesson structure to address student differences:

Teachers might present a central historical case or problem and instruct students in groups to examine the historical case on their own rather than discussing the historical case directly in a classroom discussion. This provides the opportunity to evaluate how the different groups perform historical contextualization and then I can provide more customized instructions when students ask for help. For example, when groups keep viewing the past from present-oriented perspectives, I can explain the consequences of presentism to this group. When the students do not know how to reconstruct a historical context, I can provide a hand-out with the frames of reference as guiding questions.

Conclusions and discussion

The aim of this explorative study was to develop a pedagogy and to test it to assess its success in improving students' ability to perform historical contextualization using a quasi-experimental pre- and post-test design. In contrast to scholars who focused on contextualization as a heuristic to examine historical documents (e.g. Baron, 2016; Reisman, 2012a) or on students' knowledge and strategies to date historical sources and events (e.g. Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2012; Wilschut, 2012), we explored whether the teaching strategies of Huijgen, Van

de Grift et al. (2017) could be used to develop a historical contextualization pedagogy. The results of a historical contextualization test showed that students in the experimental condition demonstrated more progress in their ability to perform historical contextualization compared to students in the control condition. A multilevel analysis indicated that the developed pedagogy had a medium effect on students' ability to perform historical contextualization.

The teachers' post-intervention interviews indicate that the structure—(1) presenting a historical case that triggers possible present-oriented perspectives, (2) instructing students to reconstruct a historical context and (3) instructing students to use historical context knowledge to evaluate the historical case again—can promote historical contextualization. Similar approaches have been suggested by scholars such as Reisman (2012b) and Havekes et al. (2012), but positive indicators of this approach in promoting students' ability to perform historical contextualization were still missing. Moreover, in line with scholars such as Lee and Ashby (2001) and VanSledright (2001) who argue that historical empathy can promote historical contextualization, our findings seem to illustrate that the historical empathy tasks helped students perform historical contextualization. The historical empathy tasks might make historical events more concrete for students (cf. De Leur, Van Boxtel, & Wilschut, 2017) and let them grasp the 'sense of a period', as Dawson (2009) calls it.

Despite the positive indicators, all teachers noted that the lesson activities took more lesson time than estimated. Especially the historical empathy tasks (which were scheduled at the end of each lesson) were therefore not always completed. Two teachers explicitly stressed that implementing all eight lessons would have left them little time to prepare their students for the formal test. To integrate the historical empathy tasks more within the other lesson activities a structure of Endacott and Pelekanos (2015) can be used where students are first introduced to historical agents (introduction phase), reconstruct a relevant historical context (investigation phase) and finally demonstrate and reflect on their historical understanding (display and reflection phase). Following this structure, the historical empathy tasks of our study can be presented as historical cases which trigger possible present-oriented perspectives (introduction phase). For example, students can be provided with a description of a European slave trader who treats slaves badly and have to reason if this slave trader risked arrestment. Subsequently, students have to reconstruct a historical context in groups or dyads (investigation phase). Finally, the teacher and the students evaluate the historical case, for example, by reasoning if the slave trader got arrested (display and reflection phase). These lesson activities can be distributed across multiple (e.g. three or four) lessons resulting in more time and flexibility for teachers.

Spreading the lesson activities across different lessons might also motivate students more since there is no repetitive lesson structure. Teachers might also start with basic instructions (e.g. teachers create a historical context and explain the past) in the first lessons and progress to more complex instructions (e.g. students working with historical sources to create a historical context to explain the historical event) in following lessons to motivate students, (e.g. Merriënboer & Kirschner, 2007). One of the teachers suggested a similar approach to prevent a repetitive structure. Moreover, to motivate students it is also important to address differences between students (Ginsberg, 2005; Subban, 2006). Three teachers noted that the intervention does not address these differences. An improvement, for example, could be to provide the guiding questions only to the students who need help in reconstructing a historical context.

An important limitation of our explorative study is the small sample size, especially for the participants in the control condition (two teachers and 30 students). A design using more participants and random sampling would be preferred (cf. Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Experimental studies should also be repeated in different settings to confirm the findings (Collins, Joseph, & Bielaczyc, 2004). Another limitation is the tests used to measure the students' ability to perform historical contextualization. The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of both instruments is on the lower end of what is considered acceptable. Refining the items by, for example, using thinking aloud protocols could provide insights into ways to increase the internal consistency. Moreover, the tests measure the ability to perform historical contextualization at a very basic level. Including History Assessments of Thinking (HATs) in historical contextualization could provide other insights because these assessments also require student argumentation (Breakstone, Smith, & Wineburg, 2013). The implementation fidelity scores of the experimental condition might also be a limitation since not all lesson activities were completed due to a lack of time. An approach where the lesson activities are more evenly distributed across different lessons is therefore preferred.

Future research on testing the pedagogy should also pay more attention to the use of mixed methods, as advocated by Shadish et al. (2002), because combining quantitative data with more qualitative data (e.g. thinking aloud protocols triggered by stimulated recall methods) provides insight into teachers' and students' motives and experiences during an intervention. In this study, teachers' diaries and post-intervention interviews were only used as a qualitative method to gain insights in how students improved in historical contextualization. A protocol analysis of a classroom discussion during the intervention and students' responses to contextualization tasks, as suggested by Reisman (2012a), could be more valuable to examine the students' progress in the ability to perform historical contextualization and their situational interest. Moreover, since research suggests that historical contextualization might also promote competencies such as learning about democratic citizenship, social perspective adoption and the ability to adopt multiple perspectives (e.g. Barton, 2012; Gehlbach, 2004), it would be interesting to examine the effects of the pedagogical design principles for these competencies.

Finally, we discuss some practical implications for the teaching and learning of history. Since there might be a dichotomy between historical skills and knowledge in history education (Counsell, 2000) and teachers might experience problems when teaching historical reasoning competencies (e.g. Barton & Levstik, 2003; Hall & Scott, 2007), the pedagogy could help teachers combine the teaching of historical content knowledge and historical reasoning competencies in a practical manner. Teachers who want to explicitly teach historical contextualization could start with implementing the cases in their lessons to prevent presentism among their students.

To conclude, intervention studies are scarce within the field of history education research; however, more attention has been given recently to the use of this methodology to examine the learning and teaching of history (e.g. De La Paz et al., 2014; Reisman, 2012a; Stoel, Van Drie, & Van Bortel, 2017). To contribute, we conducted an intervention study focusing on the learning and teaching of historical contextualization. The developed pedagogy may help teachers not only teach students historical facts but also actively engage them in the process of historical contextualization to understand and explain the differences and connections between the past and present.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the participating students and teachers who generously gave their time in the intervention.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was funded by The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) [grant number 023.001.104].

Notes on contributors

Tim Huijgen is a history teacher educator and researcher in the Department of Teacher Education, University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands. His research interests centre on historical reasoning, the teaching and learning of history, educational measurement and educational design.

Wim van de Grift is a full professor emeritus of educational sciences and he was the director of the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Groningen. His research interests are the professional development of teachers, teacher and teaching quality and school effectiveness.

Carla van Boxtel is a full professor of history education at the Research Institute of Child Development and Education and the Amsterdam School for Culture and History of the University of Amsterdam. Her research focuses on the learning and teaching of history and museum education.

Paul Holthuis is a history teacher educator and researcher at the Department of Teacher Education of the University of Groningen. His research focuses on teachers' subject-specific instructions and methods, differentiation in history education and heritage education.

ORCID

Tim Huijgen  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4426-6903>

Wim van de Grift  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9459-5292>

Carla van Boxtel  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5119-121X>

References

- Achinstein, B., & Fogo, B. (2015). Mentoring novices' teaching of historical reasoning: Opportunities for pedagogical content knowledge development through mentor-facilitated practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 45, 45–58. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2014.09.002
- Bailey, K. M. (1990). The use of diaries in teacher education programs. In J. Richards & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp. 215–226). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baron, C. (2016). Using embedded visual coding to support contextualization of historical texts. *American Educational Research Journal*, 53, 516–540. doi:10.3102/0002831216637347
- Barton, K. C. (2008). Research on students' ideas about history. In L. S. Levstik & C. A. Tyson (Eds.), *Handbook of research in social studies education* (pp. 239–258). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Barton, K. C. (2012). Agency, choice and historical action: How history teaching can help students think about democratic decision making. *Citizenship Teaching & Learning*, 7, 131–142. doi:10.1386/ctl.7.2.131_1
- Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (2003). Why don't more history teachers engage students in interpretation? *Social Education*, 67, 358–358.

- Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (2004). *Teaching history for the common good*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Berti, A. E., Baldin, I., & Toneatti, L. (2009). Empathy in history. Understanding a past institution (ordeal) in children and young adults when description and rationale are provided. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 34, 278–288. doi:[10.1016/j.cedpsych.2009.06.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2009.06.002)
- Boerman-Cornell, W. (2015). Using historical graphic novels in high school history classes: Potential for contextualization, sourcing, and corroborating. *The History Teacher*, 48(2), 209–224.
- Bose, M., & Dey, A. (2009). *Optimal crossover designs*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.
- Breakstone, J., Smith, M., & Wineburg, S. S. (2013). Beyond the bubble in history/social studies assessments. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 94(5), 53–57. doi:[10.1177/003172171309400512](https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171309400512)
- Britt, M. A., & Aglinskias, C. (2002). Improving students' ability to identify and use source information. *Cognition and Instruction*, 20, 485–522. doi:[10.1207/S1532690XCI2004_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532690XCI2004_2)
- Brown, A. L. (1992). Design experiments: Theoretical and methodological challenges in creating complex interventions in classroom settings. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 2, 141–178. doi:[10.1207/s15327809jls0202_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327809jls0202_2)
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioural sciences* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Collins, A., Joseph, D., & Bielaczyc, K. (2004). Design research: Theoretical and methodological issues. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 13, 15–42. doi:[10.1207/s15327809jls1301_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327809jls1301_2)
- Counsell, C. (2000). Historical knowledge and historical skills. In J. Arthur & R. Phillips (Eds.), *Issues in history teaching* (pp. 54–70). London: Routledge.
- Counsell, C., Burn, K., & Chapman, A. (Eds.). (2016). *Masterclass in history education: Transforming teaching and learning*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Cunningham, D. L. (2009). An empirical framework for understanding how teachers conceptualize and cultivate historical empathy in students. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 41, 679–709. doi:[10.1080/00220270902947376](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220270902947376)
- Dawson, I. (2009). What time does the tune start?: From thinking about 'sense of period' to modelling history at key stage 3. *Teaching History*, 135, 50–57.
- De Keyser, R., & Vandepitte, P. (1998). *Historical formation. Design of vision*. Brussel: Flemish Board for Catholic Secondary Education.
- De La Paz, S., Felton, M., Monte-Sano, C., Croninger, R., Jackson, C., Deogracias, J. S., & Hoffman, B. P. (2014). Developing historical reading and writing with adolescent readers: Effects on student learning. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 42, 228–274. doi:[10.1080/00933104.2014.908754](https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2014.908754)
- De Leur, T., Van Boxtel, C., & Wilschut, A. (2017). 'I Saw Angry People and Broken Statues': Historical empathy in secondary history education. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 65, 331–352. doi:[10.1080/00071005.2017.1291902](https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2017.1291902)
- Endacott, J. L., & Brooks, S. (2013). An updated theoretical and practical model for promoting historical empathy. *Social Studies Research & Practice*, 8, 41–58.
- Endacott, J. L., & Pelekanos, C. (2015). Slaves, women, and war! Engaging middle school students in historical empathy for enduring understanding. *The Social Studies*, 106, 1–7. doi:[10.1080/00377996.2014.957378](https://doi.org/10.1080/00377996.2014.957378)
- Erdmann, E. & Hasberg, W. (Eds.). (2011). *Facing – mapping – bridging diversity. Foundation of a European discourse on history education. Part 1 & 2*. Schwalbach: Wochenschau Verlag.
- Fasulo, A., Girardet, H., & Pontecorvo, C. (1998). Seeing the past: Learning history through group discussion and iconographic sources. In J. F. Voss & M. Carretero (Eds.), *Learning and reasoning in history International review of history education* (Vol. 2, pp. 132–153). London: Woburn Press.
- Fogo, B. (2014). Core practices for teaching history: The results of a Delphi panel survey. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 42, 151–196. doi:[10.1080/00933104.2014.902781](https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2014.902781)
- Foster, S., Ashby, R., & Lee, P. (2008). *Usable historical pasts: A study of students' frameworks of the past*. Swindon: ESRC.
- Gehlbach, H. (2004). Social perspective taking: A facilitating aptitude for conflict resolution, historical empathy, and social studies achievement. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 32, 39–55. doi:[10.1080/00933104.2004.10473242](https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2004.10473242)
- Ginsberg, M. B. (2005). Cultural diversity, motivation, and differentiation. *Theory into Practice*, 44, 218–225. doi:[10.1207/s15430421tip4403_6](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4403_6)

- Grant, S. & Gradwell, J. (Eds.). (2010). *Teaching with big ideas: Cases of ambitious teaching*. Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield Education.
- Hall, T. D., & Scott, R. (2007). Closing the gap between professors and teachers: "Uncoverage" as a model of professional development for history teachers. *The History Teacher*, 40, 257–263.
- Halvorsen, A. L., Harris, L. M., Aponte Martinez, G., & Frasier, A. S. (2015). Does students' heritage matter in their performance on and perceptions of historical reasoning tasks? *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 48, 457–478. doi:[10.1080/00220272.2015.1092585](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2015.1092585)
- Hartmann, U., & Hasselhorn, M. (2008). Historical perspective taking: A standardized measure for an aspect of students' historical thinking. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 18, 264–270. doi:[10.1016/j.lindif.2007.10.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2007.10.002)
- Havekes, H., Coppen, P. A., Luttenberg, J., & Van Boxtel, C. (2012). Knowing and doing history: A conceptual framework and pedagogy for teaching historical contextualisation. *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research*, 11(1), 72–93.
- Huijgen, T., & Holthuis, P. (2015). 'Why Am I Accused of Being a Heretic?' A pedagogical framework for stimulating historical contextualisation. *Teaching History*, 158, 56–61.
- Huijgen, T., Holthuis, P., Van Boxtel, C., & Van de Grift, W. (2017). *Promoting historical contextualization in classrooms: An observational study*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Huijgen, T., Van Boxtel, C., Van de Grift, W., & Holthuis, P. (2014). Testing elementary and secondary school students' ability to perform historical perspective taking: The constructing of valid and reliable measure instruments. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 29, 653–672. doi:[10.1007/s10212-014-0219-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-014-0219-4)
- Huijgen, T., Van Boxtel, C., Van de Grift, W., & Holthuis, P. (2017). Toward historical perspective taking: Students' reasoning when contextualizing the actions of people in the Past. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 45, 110–144. doi:[10.1080/00933104.2016.1208597](https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2016.1208597)
- Huijgen, T., Van de Grift, W., Van Boxtel, C., & Holthuis, P. (2017). Teaching historical contextualization: The construction of a reliable observation instrument. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 32, 159–181. doi:[10.1007/s10212-016-0295-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-016-0295-8)
- Lee, P. (2005). Putting principles into practice. In M. S. Donovan & J. D. Bransford (Eds.), *How students learn: History, mathematics, and science in the classroom* (pp. 31–78). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- Lee, P., & Ashby, R. (2001). Empathy, perspective taking, and rational understanding. In O. L. Davis, E. A. Yeager, & S. J. Foster (Eds.), *Historical empathy and perspective taking in the social studies* (pp. 21–50). Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lévesque, S. (2008). *Thinking historically. Educating students for the twenty-first century*. Toronto, ON: Toronto University Press.
- Logtenberg, A., Van Boxtel, C., & van Hout-Wolters, B. (2011). Stimulating situational interest and student questioning through three types of historical introductory texts. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 26, 179–198. doi:[10.1007/s10212-010-0041-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-010-0041-6)
- McKenney, S., & Reeves, T. C. (2012). *Conducting educational design research*. London: Routledge.
- Merriënboer, J. V., & Kirschner, P. A. (2007). *Ten steps to complex learning*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Metzger, S. (2012). The borders of historical empathy: Students encounter the holocaust through film. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 36, 387–410.
- Morris, S. B. (2008). Estimating effect sizes from pretest-posttest-control group designs. *Organizational Research Methods*, 11, 364–386. doi:[10.1177/1094428106291059](https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428106291059)
- Nelson, M. C., Cordray, D. S., Hulleman, C. S., Darrow, C. L., & Sommer, E. C. (2012). A procedure for assessing intervention fidelity in experiments testing educational and behavioral interventions. *The Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, 39, 374–396. doi:[10.1007/s11414-012-9295-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11414-012-9295-x)
- Nokes, J. D., Dole, J. A., & Hacker, D. J. (2007). Teaching high school students to use heuristics while reading historical texts. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99, 492–504. doi:[10.1037/0022-0663.99.3.492](https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.99.3.492)
- Pendry, A., & Husbands, C. (2000). Research and practice in history teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 30, 321–334. doi:[10.1080/03797720600625275](https://doi.org/10.1080/03797720600625275)
- Raudenbush, S. W., & Bryk, A. S. (2002). *Hierarchical linear models: Applications and data analysis methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Reisman, A. (2012a). Reading like a historian: A document-based history curriculum intervention in urban high schools. *Cognition and Instruction*, 30, 86–112. doi:10.1080/07370008.2011.634081
- Reisman, A. (2012b). The 'Document-Based Lesson': Bringing disciplinary inquiry into high school history classrooms with adolescent struggling readers. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 44, 233–264. doi:10.1080/00220272.2011.591436
- Reisman, A. (2015). Entering the historical problem space: Whole-class text-based discussion in history class. *Teachers College Record*, 117, 1–44.
- Reisman, A., & Fogo, B. (2016). Contributions of educative document-based curricular materials to quality of historical instruction. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 59, 191–202. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2016.05.018
- Reisman, A., & Wineburg, S. S. (2008). Teaching the skill of contextualizing in history. *The Social Studies*, 99, 202–207. doi:10.3200/tsss.99.5.202-207
- Rouet, J. F., Favart, M., Britt, M. A., & Perfetti, C. A. (1997). Studying and using multiple documents in history: Effects of discipline expertise. *Cognition and Instruction*, 15, 85–106. doi:10.1207/s1532690xci1501_3
- Saye, J., & Social Studies Inquiry Research Collaborative (SSIRC). (2013). Authentic pedagogy: Its presence in social studies classrooms and relationships to student performance on state-mandated tests. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 41, 89–132.
- Seixas, P. (2015). Translation and its discontents: Key concepts in English and German history education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 48, 427–439. doi:10.1080/00220272.2015.1101618
- Seixas, P., & Morton, T. (2013). *The big six historical thinking concepts*. Toronto, ON: Nelson Education.
- Seixas, P., & Peck, C. (2004). Teaching historical thinking. In A. Sears & I. Wright (Eds.), *Challenges and prospects for Canadian social studies* (pp. 109–117). Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press.
- Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (2002). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference*. Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Company.
- Shemilt, D. (2009). Drinking an ocean and pissing a cupful: How adolescents make sense of history. In L. Symcox & A. Wilschut (Eds.), *National history standards: The problem of the canon and the future of teaching history* (pp. 141–209). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Statistics Netherlands. (2016). Data file secondary schools. Retrieved from www.cbs.nl/english
- Stoel, G., Van Drie, J., & Van Boxtel, C. (2017). The effects of explicit teaching of strategies, second-order concepts, and epistemological underpinnings on students' ability to reason causally in history. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 109, 321–337. doi:10.1037/edu0000143
- Subban, P. (2006). Differentiated instruction: A research basis. *International Education Journal*, 7, 935–947.
- Van Boxtel, C., & Van Drie, J. (2012). "That's in the Time of the Romans!" Knowledge and strategies students use to contextualize historical images and documents. *Cognition and Instruction*, 30, 113–145. doi:10.1080/07370008.2012.661813
- Van Drie, J., & Van Boxtel, C. (2008). Historical reasoning: Towards a framework for analyzing students' reasoning about the past. *Educational Psychology Review*, 20, 87–110. doi:10.1007/s10648-007-9056-1
- VanSledright, B. A. (2001). From empathic regard to self-understanding: Im/Positionality, empathy, and historical contextualization. In O. L. Davis, E. A. Yeager Jr, & S. J. Foster (Eds.), *Historical empathy and perspective taking in the social studies* (pp. 51–68). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- VanSledright, B. A. (2002). *In search of America's past: Learning to read history in elementary school*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- VanSledright, B. A. (2011). *The challenge of rethinking history education: On practices, theories, and policy*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., & Sinagub, J. M. (1996). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wilschut, A. (2012). *Images of time. The role of an historical consciousness of time in learning history*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Wineburg, S. S. (1991). Historical problem solving: A study of the cognitive processes used in the evaluation of documentary and pictorial evidence. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 83, 73–87. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.83.1.73
- Wineburg, S. S. (1998). Reading Abraham Lincoln: An expert/expert study in the interpretation of historical texts. *Cognitive Science*, 22, 319–346. doi:10.1207/s15516709cog2203_3

Wineburg, S. S. (2001). *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts. Charting the future of teaching the past*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Wooden, J. A. (2008). "I had always heard Lincoln was a good person, but...": A study of sixth graders' reading of Lincoln's views on black – White relations. *The Social Studies*, 99, 23–32. doi:10.3200/TSSS.99.1.23-32

Yilmaz, K. (2007). Historical empathy and its implications for classroom practices in schools. *The History Teacher*, 40, 331–337.

Appendix A. Pre- and post-test example items (historical contextualization)

Item (pre-test)

Instruction: Read the following source describing a day programme of the games in Ancient Rome.

The gladiator fighting constituted the highlight of the day. First, the hunters demonstrated their expertise with different weapons. In the afternoon, prisoners were thrown to the wild animals. After that, adventurous gladiators began fighting. If there was no decisive victor in the fight, the people who witnessed the fight could decide which gladiator might live.

Choose the statement that best matches this source:

- People should not have the power to decide on life and death.
- Gladiator games were common entertainment for the Roman people.

Item (pre-test)

Instruction: Read the following source about marriage in the Middle Ages.

In the Middle Ages, girls were sometimes married at the age of eleven. The family arranged the marriage. After her marriage, her inheritance was automatically transferred to her husband. Therefore, knights often sought a rich heir.

Choose the statement that best matches this source:

- Women have the right to choose their own husbands.
- These were marriages of convenience that often did not involve much love.

Item (post-test)

Instruction: Read the following source about Roman Emperor Nero and the fire of Rome.

To suppress the rumour that the fire was lit on [imperial] command, Emperor Nero blamed a group of Christians and subjected them to the most ingenious punishments. A huge mass of people was sentenced—not because of the crime of arson but because of hatred towards humanity. In addition, their dying was coupled with scorn: they were, for example, covered with wild animals hides and torn apart by dogs or nailed to crosses.

Choose the statement that best matches this source:

- The Romans were afraid of the Christians and tried to suppress them.
- Everyone is entitled to religious freedom, and therefore, Nero violated the law.

Item (post-test)

Instruction: Read the following source about punishments on ships in the late Middle Ages.

Keelhauling is a punishment that could be imposed by a ship captain on crew members. With a rope, the person was dragged under the ship. Because the ship's hull was always covered with shells, keelhauling caused severe injuries to the victim.

Choose the statement that best matches this source:

- The captain's authority on a ship is holy and the law.
- A court must pronounce the punishment instead of the captain.

Appendix B. Guiding questions for reconstructing a historical context

Social-political context

- (1) Was there a government?
- (2) What kind of governance was present (democracy/dictatorship/monarchy/aristocracy/oligarchy)?
- (3) Which political parties existed (liberalism/socialism/confessionals)?
- (4) Who had political power?
- (5) Did the country have colonies?
- (6) Who could participate in the political process?
- (7) Was there a central authority?
- (8) Was there any military/political conflict?
- (9) Was there separation of political powers (executive, judicial, and legislative)?
- (10) Was there separation between church and state?

Social-economic context

- (1) What type of socio-economic system was present (agricultural/agricultural-urban/industrial)?
- (2) Which economic conditions were present (prosperity/crises/famine)?
- (3) What kind of economy was present (self-sufficient, free trade/protection)?
- (4) Were there factories?
- (5) What forms of tax were there?
- (6) Who had to pay taxes?
- (7) Which economic inventions were there?
- (8) What types of trade were there, and on what scale was trade driven?
- (9) Which economic sectors existed (agriculture/industry/services)?
- (10) Did people live mainly in cities or in the countryside (urbanization/suburbanization)?

Social-cultural context

- (1) Was there social inequality between people (grades/positions/wealth/poverty)?
- (2) Which religions were allowed/suppressed?
- (3) Was there censorship/freedom of expression?
- (4) Which freedoms did people have?
- (5) What role did faith play?
- (6) Was the society multicultural?
- (7) What did people believe in?
- (8) What was the worldview of the people?
- (9) Were there many scientific discoveries?
- (10) Was there much attention given to art and culture?